

D H Lawrence As His Taos Contemporaries Saw Him

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現地の人達が見たタオス滞在中のロレンス

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ロレンスがアメリカのニューメキシコ州タオスに滞在した折、機械化された都会の生活から離れ、山や森といった自然の只中にかこまれた生活をととても楽しんだ。彼は山中の農村に生活して、人間として深く満足したのみならず、作家としても心から資するものがあつた。タオス滞在中に彼が書いたものの中には異なるジャンルにまたがる秀れた作品がいくつかある。

After the nightmare war—years during which Lawrence was both prosecuted for his writings and persecuted for his 'Hunwife', he felt like leaving England for good. He wanted to go far away from England and the European Continent, and he thought of going to America. But as David Ellis has explained, Lawrence's feelings towards America had always been "complex":

Some of the complexities are apparent in 'The Evening Land', a poem which is signed 'Baden—Baden' where he stayed from May until July 1921. In its opening lines he addresses America directly and asks, 'Shall I come to you, the open tomb of my race?' The rest of the poem makes it clear that in Lawrence's view white America is ahead of Europe only in the sense that it is further down both the materialistic and idealistic track, and close therefore to the inevitable catastrophe from which a new era of living would emerge. He described his soul only as 'half—cajoled; confesses himself apprehensive of what he expects to find in the States: 'I am terrified, America / of the iron click of your human contact'; and in conclusion asks to be allured until all his reservations disappear. (7)

In fact, his reservations seem to have already been eroding. On 28 December 1918, he had written to Amy Lowell that he wanted to go to the "new country," to America:

England is wintry and uncongenial. Towards summer time, I want to be in a new country. I expect we shall go to Switzerland or Germany when Peace is signed. Frieda wants to see her people. ... But I want to come to America. I don't know why. The land itself draws me"

(*Letters*, iii, 314).

Amy, however, was not very encouraging, possibly thinking that America was not yet ready to receive him. So, the Lawrences went to the Continent instead. Frieda went to her family in Germany, and Lawrence to Italy where Frieda joined him before long. After a two—year stay in Italy, Lawrence again became restless. This time he felt that Italy had 'gone rancid' (Moore 434). He told Earl Brewster that he wanted "ultimately, to get a little farm somewhere by myself, in Mexico, New Mexico, Rocky Mountains or British Columbia" (Moore 435). By a brilliant coincidence, within a month of Lawrence's writing this, he received a letter from Mabel Dodge Sterne, inviting him to visit Taos. He had already seen pictures of Taos at Gertrude's brother Leo Stein's home in Florence. He had perhaps also seen or heard of Maurice Sterne's Taos—related works. He was therefore pleased with the prospect of going to Taos and America. But soon he began to have second thoughts as Mabel's 'wilful' personality started to filter through her insistent letters. He postponed his trip, and it was only after short visits to Ceylon and Australia that the Lawrences landed in San Francisco in early September in 1922.

They arrived at Taos on 11 September 1922, and finally left it three years later on 10 September 1925. During this period, they made one short trip to Europe and several

to Mexico. All in all, he spent about twenty months in the Taos region. His first reaction to his life there was a mixed one. He was "dazed" and "bewildered" by the vast and empty landscape at over eight thousand feet altitude. He soon began to feel stifled by the "padrona" who, he started to realize, was making it difficult for him to be "breathing on [his] own" or going his "own little way" (*Letters*, iv, 305). On the other hand, he was hopeful, and rightly so, that he would like it there, and that the writer in him would be welcomed in that country. Within a week of his arrival in Taos, he wrote to his English publisher Martin Secker, "If America will accept me and England won't, I belong to America" (*Letters*, iv, 299).

Peter Ackroyd informs us that at the moment of his birth Lawrence Durrell "felt, in the words of [his] biographer, 'a monumental loneliness, a cosmic indifference'" (41). D H Lawrence's biographers do not indulge in such absurd speculations about his feelings at the moment of his birth, but in their detailed accounts of his short life one is apt to miss what I want to emphasise here, namely, how profoundly he enjoyed living in New Mexico and how his living conditions proved so conducive to his writing. As he settled down in that region, both the man and artist in him flourished. During his time there he wrote or revised, novels, novellas, short stories, poems, essays, criticism, translation and at least one play. Indeed, this was one of the most prolific periods of his literary career. And, as he had hoped, he became financially well off too. He seemed to have greatly enjoyed living in farm-like conditions, in log cabins, even without the basic amenities of modern life, like running water, heating or cooking gas. According to Warren Roberts, "Taos came closer to being a home for the Lawrences than any of the places they lived before his death in 1930" (*Letters* iv, 14). It is therefore reasonable to suppose, and claim, that this American locale came closest to Lawrence's ideal *Rananim* (named probably after one of Koteliensky's Hebrew songs, meaning 'green' or 'flourishing'). Maurice Lesemann, a business executive, who had also published poems in *Poetry* and other periodicals, met Lawrence in October 1922, soon after his arrival in Taos. Lawrence told him :

I should like to see the young people gather somewhere away from the city, somewhere where living is cheap—in a place like this, for instance ; let them have a farm or a ranch, with horses and a cow, and not try to make it pay. Don't let him try make it pay—like Brook Farm. That was the trouble with Brook Farm. But let them support themselves by their writing, or their painting or whatever it is.

(qtd. in Nehls 195)

This was precisely what Lawrence himself seems to have done. As his Taos contemporaries have testified, Lawrence in many ways lived there the farm-life that he had thus envisaged. He was safely away "from the city" and wrote, and wrote prolifically.

Katherine Mansfield is reported to have said somewhere that there were three Lawrences : the black devil whom she hated, the prophet whom she did not believe, and the man and the artist whom she loved and valued (Moore 449). It was in Taos that the third Lawrence emerged most notably. Among the people who knew him during his time in Taos, some wrote down their accounts of Lawrence and they have left a fascinating

portrait of the man and the artist.

Two wandering Danish painters, Knud Merrild and Kai Gotzsche, first met the Lawrences at a dinner party in the house of Walter Ufer who was the President of the Taos Artists Group. Ufer told the Danes, "I think you ought to meet a modern Englishman who is in Taos now. He is a writer and world famous too" (Merrild 9). By the time Lawrence arrived in America, he was indeed quite famous as a writer, and that was one reason why Mabel had invited him. He was held in some awe by people who saw him. Earlier, in Australia, he had created excitement when he appeared before a group of local intellectuals in Perth: a woman writer Katherine Pritchard became so excited on meeting him that she prematurely gave birth to her child (Moore 444). And his American publisher Thomas Stelzer had instructed his wife Adele that she must wash her hands before reading Lawrence's letters! (Letters iv, 396). The Danish painters, however, knew almost next to nothing about this English writer or his works, and they remained mainly silent listeners to the conversation during their first meeting with him. But they got to know him well soon after when they happened to meet Lawrence while riding nearby. Lawrence joined them, and after an exhilarating but long and tiring ride, he brought them home for dinner and they became friends. When Mabel's interfering 'wilfulness' and emotional gestures made it impossible for the Lawrences to continue to live in Taos, the Lawrences moved to her abandoned old ranch high up in the mountains some seventeen miles away. They took the Danes with them, not only for their friendship but also because these two hardy men could help them in restoring the dilapidated cabins that they were to occupy. When Mabel refused to leave them in peace even there, the Lawrences, together with the Danes, moved, finally to the Hawks's ranch in Del Monte, where they all spent the winter of 1922-23.

One of the Danes, Knud Merrild, wrote a book *A Poet and Two Painters* (1938), in which he has left a record of their live with the Lawrences during that winter. One of the delights of reading Merrild's book is to discover how happy the Lawrences were there. Merrild tells us a lot about Lawrence enjoying living an ordinary life, chopping wood, taking care of the animals, cooking and baking bread, mending things, riding and singing. He also gives us glimpses of the man who was a writer and artist. I would now like to take up some aspects of this portrait of Lawrence which has been filled in by his other Taos contemporaries.

Though Mabel claims that it was she and her companion Tony who taught the Lawrences how "to ride horseback" (75-76), Frieda has said that "a long thin Don Quixote of a Mexican taught us how to ride across the open desert" (121). Anyway, they soon became good at riding horses, even though Lawrence seemed to have looked rather awkward on horseback, particularly so when the horse became unruly. Mabel noted that when once Lawrence got on one, "the horse ran right off down the field, with him hobbing up and down, light as a feather, and humped over the animal's neck the way monkeys ride, in the circus" (Nehls 191-2). Joseph Foster also felt that Lawrence "did not look very well on a horse" (156). But they, and many others, have testified that Lawrence, though a novice as a rider, was fearless, and that he never fell off a horse. He

liked to gallop across the open spaces. He liked too to get toggged up in his riding gear. Maurice Lesemann, who had gone riding with Lawrence, has left a description of Lawrence, the rider :

Lawrence was dressed in leather puttees and riding breeches ; and a little white woolen coat of Scotch homespun without collar, a strange garment in this country... (qtd. in Nehls 194)

Similarly, Merrild has described how, when they all set out for a ride to the hot springs, Lawrence was appropriately attired, looking like "a real general" :

He had a huge, grey, five-gallon hat, a leather jacket and chequered trousers tucked into a pair of long, high-heeled boots. (78)

And, like "a real general", Lawrence insisted on being ahead of his troops! Mabel thought that Lawrence "couldn't stand the idea of a woman in the lead" (77), but the truth seems to have been that he could not stand having *anyone* ahead of him. Merrild tells us of Lawrence's reaction when Gotzsche passed him. He asked the Dane to stop, and told him, "This horse is so shy and nervous, it cannot have any other in the lead. It become restless and unruly, and very hard to handle. You must stay behind" (80).

Provided his rules were observed, Lawrence was always a jolly and cheerful companion on excursions. Often he felt so happy that he began to sing. For instance, on their way to Manby Springs, Lawrence began to sing. Frieda—"who had the better voice of the two"—soon joined him. On noticing that the Danes were silent, he asked them to sing. When they told him that they did not know his English songs, he said, "Oh, sing anything, just sing!" (31). One may broaden this pictures of a cheerful Lawrence with the anecdotes of his Taos contemporaries recounting how he was fond of entertaining the company with funny stories, charades and mimicries. Mabel has said :

He loved charades—and he was so gay and witty when he was playing! He could imitate anything or anybody. His ability to identify himself intuitively with things outside himself was wonderful. We had some boisterous evenings... that left us hot and happy and full of ease. (qtd. in Nehls 189)

Similarly, Maurice Lesemann noted :

The eagerness and exultation were constant in him. One night by the fire he told stories about English people he had known, imitating with absurd nicety their voice and manner, their entire conversation. He described their way of walking, and must needs jump from his chair and pace up and down the floor—until finally they rose up before us—heroic, monumental in caricature. And then he would remember one thing more, and it [was] so ridiculous that he would sit down : and his voice would break and go coursing away into a chuckling laugh before he could tell what overpowered him.

(qtd. in Nehls 195)

No wonder these people felt that Lawrence was a very friendly person. The Danes said that Lawrence "was their true friend" (91).

Not only was he friendly, he was kind, helpful and generous. I would like to mention briefly his generosity with money, because he has sometimes been accused of being mean and miserly in money matters. But, in fact, as even Witter Bynner has acknowledged, Lawrence "was always ready to hand over a sizable part of his own small balance, when he had one, to almost any friend in need, with no thought of gratitude or even repayment" (145). He regularly sent money to Frieda's mother and her sisters, and he posted a cheque to the Danes when they were living precariously in Los Angeles, without their asking for it. Merrild gratefully acknowledged :

.... the real thing is that Lawrence was so concerned about us that he feared that perhaps, in a large city where we were absolute strangers with little or no money and without work, we would be starving rather than ask for help... (295)

When his literary agent Mountsier told Lawrence of his planned visit to him, he asked him to "bring a couple of ten-dollar pieces and three or four five dollars from the bank : for the servants at Christmas" (*Letters*. iv, 325).

Lawrence's Tao's contemporaries have also introduced him to us as a domestic handiman. Lawrence the cook is well known. But he seems to have sharpened his skills during his time there. He bragged to Joseph Foster that he could bake "twenty loaves at a time in half an hour" (152). Merrild has confirmed this, with the slight reservation, that "except for the first few loaves which were vile, he did it very well" (82). Merrild also awards Lawrence high grades for his typical English cooking : "I have not tasted a better roast with mint sauce, Yorkshire pudding or mince meat anywhere in England" (82). Lawrence was very good at doing other domestic chores too. When Kyle Crichton, a journalist visited Lawrence for an interview, he noticed, among other things, that the house in which the Lawrences lived in Del Monte was "immaculate, so scrubbed and shining." Frieda told him that it was all Lawrence's work :

"You'd never think it of him." said Frieda proudly, " ... but he's the most practical man I've ever know. He made the bread this morning in the Indian oven just outside the door there, milked Susan and looked after the chickens. When you get the chance, look at the cowshed and say a word about it. He's very proud of that : he did it all with his own hand (qtd. In Nehls 416).

Lawrence also did all the outdoor work that a ranch-dweller had to do. When the Lawrences and the Danes first moved to their Del Monte ranch, they had to get and store wood for the winter. They found a huge pine tree. After felling it they set down to the long and laborious job of cutting it for firewood. Merrild recounts how Lawrence insisted on doing "his share" of the plain hard labour it involved. Even though he had neither the physical strength nor the skill to chop wood, he insisted on doing his bit. The Danes realized this and gave him the kind of work he *could* do :

We had to let him chop the smaller pieces of wood. He wanted to do his share. He was really a good sport. And so it was, and we were glad too. It had hurt us to see him strain himself. He did not have

the strength to be efficient with heavy tools, he looked awkward and clumsy, and so was the work he did which required strength in execution. What he could handle with ease he did skilfully well, and he enjoyed doing it. (76-77).

It is remarkable that when he had to do this kind of work again in Kiowa, he did it on his own. This time he himself became the Danes to Brett's Lawrence. When they went out looking for wood they decided on a "couple of straight pines, not too big." He told her :

"I'll chop this one down, while you trim the branches of the other ; only mind and get out of the way when this one falls."

(qtd. in Nehls 354)

Lawrence found this kind of physical labour rewarding, not only in practical but also personal terms. When Brett reminded him that all this was "hard work", he replied :

"Yes it is, but you have no idea how soothing it is so the nerves.

When I am in a temper, I like to run into these quiet woods and chop down a tree : it quiets the nerves."

(qtd. in Nehls 354)

As I have suggested above, this life of a rancher proved to be conducive not only to his personal well-being but also to his creative self. Soon after arriving in America, he finished the typescript of *Kangaroo*. He published *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *England My England* both in October 1922, *Studies in Classic American Literature* in August 1923, *The Boy in the Bush* in August 1924 and *St Mawr* in June 1925. In May 1923, he started *The Plumed Serpent*, first as *Quetzecoatl*, and this went through various versions and revisions and was finally published in January 1926. Lawrence also wrote a large number of poems at this time and most of them went into his *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* which was published in October 1923. In addition, he wrote one play, *David*, several short stories and many pieces, long or short, including *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*, 'Art and Morality,' 'Morality and the Novel,' 'The Novel,' 'Why the Novel Matters' and 'Surgery for the Novel-Or a Bomb.'

Perhaps, like most artists, he did not discuss his work with others. So his Taos contemporaries have practically nothing to say about what he was writing. But many of them do comment on his writing habits, his reading, his opinions on various subjects and his artistic personality. Merrild confessed that when he knew Lawrence in Taos, he had not read his works. However, by the time he came to write his book of reminiscences, he discovered that Lawrence "wrote as he spoke": "I read the books that Lawrence had written at that time, and I find his daily experiences clearly recognizable in those books" (xiii). Merrild's methodology of writing these memoirs have been questioned because he quotes huge chunks from Lawrence's writings purporting them to be the writer's own words. David Ellis remarks that Merrild's "record is partly ruined by the adoption of a disastrously mistaken method. Fearful that he would inadvertently put into Lawrence's mouth different words than the ones he had used in Del Monte, Merrild chose to represent him as continually spouting long passages from his published works"(94). But I think Merrild's methodology is quite effective at times. For instance, his juxtaposition of

his own description of an event and Lawrence's rendering of it in his writings is highly instructive. On the one hand, Lawrence's writing reveals his inner feelings and motivations for his specific behaviour which were not open to the outsiders. On the other hand, we get an insight into Lawrence's skill in transforming a personal experience into a work of art. For instance, Merrild describes the occasion when they all decided to go to the hot springs, about twenty miles away, for a bath. They rented horses from the rancher and set off. While the rest of the party got cow ponies, Lawrence "was given the only real horse, a beautiful sorrel, very shy and very quick" (77). But before they had gone far, the "shy sorrel got frightened" :

She reared on her hind legs, made a leap on one side, and in a wild panic went off with Lawrence, who instantly and completely lost control of her. He bobbed up and down, and every second we feared he would be thrown but he hung on. Lagging behind, we followed on the ponies. The sorrel, in its wild dash, came to the edge of the ravine, did not stop nor alter its course, but plunged down the side, barely missing the trees on its way. Lawrence ducked his head to avoid being brushed off by the dangerous, low-hanging branches. One scratched him and tore off his hat. We were almost afraid to look, but we followed as best as we could. Then the sorrel stumbled as he reached the bottom of the ravine. Lawrence immediately seized the opportunity, reined it and got control just as Gotzsche and I rode up to his side. The presence of the other horses soon quieted the shy sorrel and we went up the ravine and joined Frieda, who had been a frightened spectator. (78)

Naturally, Lawrence talked to his companions about this experience, but Merrild did not remember "word for word" what Lawrence said. Instead, he lets the artist "talk" of the whole incident through the passage from *The Boy in Bush* that he goes on to quote :

[Jack's] bones rattled, his hat flew off, his heart beat high. But unless the horse came down backwards on top of him, he could stay on. And he was not really afraid. He thought: 'If he does not go down backward on top of me, I shall be all right.' He tried to quiet the horse. 'Steady now, steady!' And all the time he held on his thighs and knees, like iron. He did not believe in the innate viciousness of the horse. He never believed in the innate viciousness of anything, except man. Gripping the hot horse in a grip of sensual mastery that made him tremble strangely with a curious quivering. Yet he dared not relax. —The horse bolted like the wind, and Jack held on with his knees and by balance. He was thrilled really: frightened externally, but internally keyed up; and never for a moment did he relax his mind's attention, nor the attention of his own tossed body. Up he went, off the saddle, and down he came again, with a shattering jerk, down on the front of the saddle. The

balance he kept was a mystery even to himself, his body was so flung about by the volcano of furious life beneath him. (78-79)

It is worth quoting this in full because of what it shows of Lawrence's artistic insights and skills. While Merrild saw only the fright and panic in the scene, Lawrence, in his writing, is able to describe in vivid details the complex emotions on the part of the rider and his awareness (even more characteristic) of the 'otherness' of the horse. When the two passages are compared, the second one is clearly revealed as the work of the man who was then writing the poems of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

The famous (or notorious) episode that Merrild has recorded about Lawrence's cruel treatment of his dog is equally instructive. Mabel had given the Lawrences the offspring of her French bull terrier Lorraine. They variously called it 'Pips', 'Pipsey' and 'Bibbles.' They grew extremely fond of it and even wanted to take it with them to Mexico. However, Lawrence demanded extreme fidelity from this dog which he loved very much. Merrild has described how the dog was 'promiscuous' by nature. He would often stay on with the Danes' much to Lawrence's annoyance. So, one day he gave the dog to them. But it went back to Lawrence. However, it continued to 'love' people and animals 'indiscriminately' and Lawrence did not like this. When one day he discovered that Bibbles had gone off with the dog of the ranch house, he got furiously enraged. He spanked and kicked it viciously and flung it out in the snow. Both the Danes felt outraged at the time, and could only see it as a part of the contradictory personality of the man they loved. However, the poem that he wrote, based on this incident, reveals not only a possible explanation of his extraordinary behavior but also the artistic intelligence which enabled him to examine and explore his own ideas and attitudes. The much-loved dog is after all guilty of the 'universal love' for which Lawrence had castigated Whitman :

Oh, Bibbles, on Pips, oh Pipsey
You little black love—bird! !
Don't you love *everybody!!!*
Just everybody
You love'em all
Believe in the One Identity, don't you,
You little Walt Whitmanesque bitch?

When the dog returned to Lawrence in contrition after his adventures, he was sick in bed, but to Merrild Lawrence "seemed greatly pleased and gave in to Pips with little reserve":

So now, what with great Airedale dogs,
And a kick or two,
And a few vomiting bouts,
And a juniper switch,
You look at me for discrimination, don't you?
Look up at me with misgiving in your bulging eyes,
And fear in the smoky whites of your eyes, you nigger;
And you're puzzled,

You think you'd better mind your P's and Q's for a bit,
You sensitive Love—pride being all hurt.

All right, my little bitch.
You learn loyalty rather than loving,
And I'll protect you.

Merrild left "Pips on the bed with Lawrence. From now on Pips stayed at Lawrence's cabin. The reunion seemed a happy one" (176).

An interesting conclusion one is tempted to draw from this experience and the other accounts of Lawrence's life at this time is that Lawrence very much wrote out of life's experiences, that neither in his life nor in his writings was he influenced by the writings of other people. Indeed, from what we know, he was more of a rancher than a reader of serious books. The American author and editor Kyle Crichton was "shocked", as he said, to find that Lawrence had only about ten books in his house, and that the only thing that he read with enjoyment was a pulp magazine called *Adventure*, which mainly printed escapist fiction and stories of adventures in distant places and pasts. Lawrence told Crichton that

"the writers are very lively and they are honest and they are accurate about facts. If they say something happened in a certain way in Africa or Malaya, you can depend on it...."

What about the better known American magazines, I asked, trying not to show my horror and pain. Lawrence made a wry face.

"With milk and honey blest," he said. (qtd. in Nehls 416)

When Lawrence was bed-ridden with bronchitis, Brett brought him "the new number of the magazine *Adventure*" because "he liked reading it more than anything else" (qtd. in Nehls 419). It becomes obvious that Lawrence did not require, at this stage at any rate, any external intellectual stimulus or guidance for his own writings.

An account of his writing habits would seem to underscore this point. Brett noted that Lawrence would just go, sit under a tree and write:

In the quiet, still morning, with his copy-book under his arm and his fountain pen, he goes off away into the woods; sometimes one can see glimpses of him through the trees, sitting leaning up against the trunk of a pine tree.... in a dream, abstracted, in the world of the story he is writing. (qtd. in Nehls 356)

Trees seem to have been a special source of creative inspiration for Lawrence in America. Spud Johnson also noted:

[Lawrence] sat there, back against a tree, eyes often looking over the scene that was to be the background for his novel, and wrote in tiny, fast words in a thick, blue-bound blank book

(qtd. in Nehls 236)

On the other hand, he was capable, as Witter Bynner was surprised to observe, "of writing and talking at the same moment":

... we would have coffee, cordials and conversation in the room, while Lawrence, reclining on the bed with notebook and pencil, would be busy at essays, sketches, reviews, random writings, which went off in the mails. (24)

What was more remarkable, as Bynner hints here, was that what Lawrence thus wrote was often the final copy. According to Brett, he would "tear off a few pages at a time of his copy-book" (qtd. in Nehls 353) for her to type straight away.

All this was in keeping with Lawrence's general creative personality and his artistic intentions. Writing was part of living for him. He told Brett that he wrote when he felt he had to :

I never know when I sit down just what I am going to write. I make no plans ; it just comes, and I don't know where it comes from. Of course I have a general sort of outline of what I want to write about, but when I go out in the mornings I have no idea what I will write. It just comes, and I really don't know where from.

(qtd. in Nehls 409)

At the same time, Lawrence felt a sense of deep moral responsibility, that he must share this talent with the world. He told Crichton :

You don't write for anybody : you rather write from a deep moral sense—for the race as it were ... A writer writes because he can't help writing, and because he has something in him that he feels he can say better than it has been said before, and because it would be wrong, entirely wrong, to possess a talent and have thoughts without sharing them with the world.

(qtd. in Nehls 414)

One can say, therefore, that in New Mexico, when he happened to live away from civilization, Lawrence flourished both as a rancher and a writer. Though he seems to have led an ordinary life here, the whole experience of living in these surroundings had a profound effect on him. So much so that he was moved to express the effect in these eloquent terms :

I think New Mexico was the greatest experience from the outside world that I have ever had. It certainly changed me for ever. Curious as it may sound, it was New Mexico that liberated me from the present era of civilization, the great era of mechanical development . . .

. . . the moment I saw the brilliant proud morning shine high up over the deserts of Santa Fe, something stood still in my soul, and I started to attend.

(qtd. in Inglis, 126—7)

* A briefer version of this paper was read at the Seventh D H Lawrence International Conference held in Taos on 15 July 1998.

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